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Agreement with Nez Perces Indians

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AGREEMENT WITH NEZ PERCÉS INDIANS.

JUNE 8, 1894.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and ordered to be printed.

Mr. WILSON, of Washington, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 7387.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6253) to ratify the agreement made with the Nez Percés tribe of Indians, in the State of Idaho, for the sale of their surplus lands, dated the 1st day of May, 1893, have had the same under consideration, and report a substitute for the bill (H. R. 6253) and recommend the passage of the substitute.

On the 1st of May, 1893, Robert Schleicher, James F. Allen, and Cyrus Beede concluded an agreement with the Nez Percés Indians, of Idaho, by which agreement the said Indians released to the United States about 556,207 acres of land, to be opened to settlement under the provisions of the homestead, town site, timber, and stone and mineral laws of the United States. The bill reported by the committee provides that persons entering these lands shall pay \$3.75 per acre for agricultural lands, and \$5 per acre for timber and stone and mineral lands.

It is believed that the money received from the sale of these lands at the prices fixed in the bill will fully reimburse the Government for all expenditures made in connection with the purchase of the land or negotiation of the treaty, and all incidental expenses in any manner connected therewith. It is believed that the first payment made under the treaty will be returned to the Treasury as quickly as settlers can make the payments required under the bill. In support of this proposition, two statements are submitted, estimating, each independently of the other, the classes of land and the acreage thereunder, thrown open to settlement by the terms of the treaty referred to.

Robert Schleicher, chairman of the commission which negotiated this treaty, submits the following estimate:

	Acre.
Prairie agricultural land.....	350,000
Timber agricultural land.....	70,000
Mineral land.....	20,000
Timber and stone land.....	70,000
Mountainous land not estimated.....	46,207½
Total number of acres under this estimate.....	556,207½

The estimate thus made at the prices fixed by the bill would bring to the Government the following sum:

350,000 acres agricultural land, at \$3.75 per acre	\$1,312,500
70,000 acres timber agricultural land, at \$3.75 per acre	262,500
20,000 acres mineral land, at \$5 per acre	100,000
70,000 acres timber and stone, at \$5 per acre	350,000
Total.....	2,025,000

It further appears that Mr. Schleicher has resided near this reservation, and in the county in which it is situated, many years. He is familiar with the resources of that country, a conservative man in all things, and his judgment good with reference to the matter upon which he has expressed an opinion.

Hon. Frank A. Fenn furnishes another estimate covering the same ground. Mr. Fenn was born in the county in which this reservation is situated, has lived there all of his life, and since the organization of a State government for Idaho, has been connected with the public lands department of the State. He is as well informed concerning the resources of any section of Idaho, and the resources of the section of land proposed to be ceded by this bill in particular, as any man in the United States. His estimate is as follows:

Agricultural land, 336,207 acres, at \$3.75 per acre	\$1,260,776.25
Timber agricultural land, 40,000 acres, at \$3.75 per acre.....	150,000.00
50,000 acres timber and stone land, at \$5 per acre.....	250,000.00
30,000 acres mineral land, at \$5 per acre.....	150,000.00
100,000 acres mountainous grazing land, at 50 cents per acre	50,000.00
Total.....	1,860,776.25

The surplus to the Government at the price paid and at the price sold, under the Schleicher estimate, would be \$356,378.

The surplus under the Fenn estimate would be \$192,154.

Mr. Fenn, did not, of course, fix the price per acre of any of this land. The 100,000 acres is estimated at 50 cents per acre for the purpose of showing what the Government ought ultimately to realize out of it, assuming that the estimate is correct. It would not, of course, cut any immediate figure in reimbursing the Treasury.

There are about 1,500 of these Indians. They have taken land in severalty, are well advanced in civilization, and are desirous of becoming citizens of the United States.

A copy of the agreement is included in the substitute. The Indians look upon the sale of this land as being accomplished, and are now anxiously awaiting the consummation of the agreement as signed by them and the commissioners on the part of the United States.

Attention is called to S. Ex. Doc. 31, Fifty-third Congress, second session, which contains the report of the commission, and all of the proceedings under which the treaty was negotiated, and a copy of the agreement and the letters of the Secretary of the Interior and Commissioner of Indian Affairs relative thereto.

Finally, the treaty and its ratification are in line with well established policy of the Government.